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Pastora Bombed, CIA Disappears

After the bomb went off at Edén Pastora's news conference last week, Pastora and officers loyal to him were pointing the finger at the CIA. The invaluable Canadian Broadcasting Corporation news show *As It Happens* (broadcast here at 9:30 p.m. on WNYC-AM) led with the accusations, and the next day's *Washington Post* included them as well. Given what the *Times* had reported only a day earlier about the CIA's continued pressure on Pastora to throw in his lot with the ex-Somocistas the agency has been funding, his charges had a certain plausibility. They went unreported in Friday's *Times*, however, and instead there was a quote from the Costa Rican president suggesting that Sandinista agents had penetrated Pastora's organization. When the *Times*'s Stephen Kinzer did get around to reporting the charges a day later, he softened them by claiming that Pastora had also charged—before raising the CIA issue—that Sandinista forces had been responsible for the attack. No quotes from Pastora were introduced to support this notion, and none appeared in any other journal I read. Kinzer did quote the American ambassador to Costa Rica saying, "The CIA doesn't do this kind of thing," but one imagines that's more or less what he would have said about mining Nicaraguan harbors before the truth came out (Tuesday's *Times* did manage to report that the prime suspect in the bombing had been posing as a Danish journalist and was carrying a stolen Danish passport—which makes it at least unlikely that he was an indigenous Sandinista infiltrator—but this news came from UPI's Copenhagen bureau, not from Kinzer).

The *Times* also did a curious thing in an unsigned box in Friday's first-day stories about the assassination attempt. Listing American journalists who'd been killed covering Central American conflicts in the past five years, it mentioned that "Bill Stewart, an ABC News correspondent, was shot dead in Managua, Nicaragua, while covering a battle in June 1979 between government soldiers and Sandinista rebels," thus giving the impression that Stewart had been caught in some sort of crossfire. What actually happened—and what ABC ran videotapes of at the time—was that Somoza's National Guardsmen stopped Stewart at a border crossing, told him to lie face down on the ground, and executed him at point-blank range. This is rather a different thing, and since it now seems to be official U.S. policy to prefer the ex-National Guardsmen to anti-Sandinistas of the Pastora stripe, Stewart's murder should not have been so blandly dismissed.